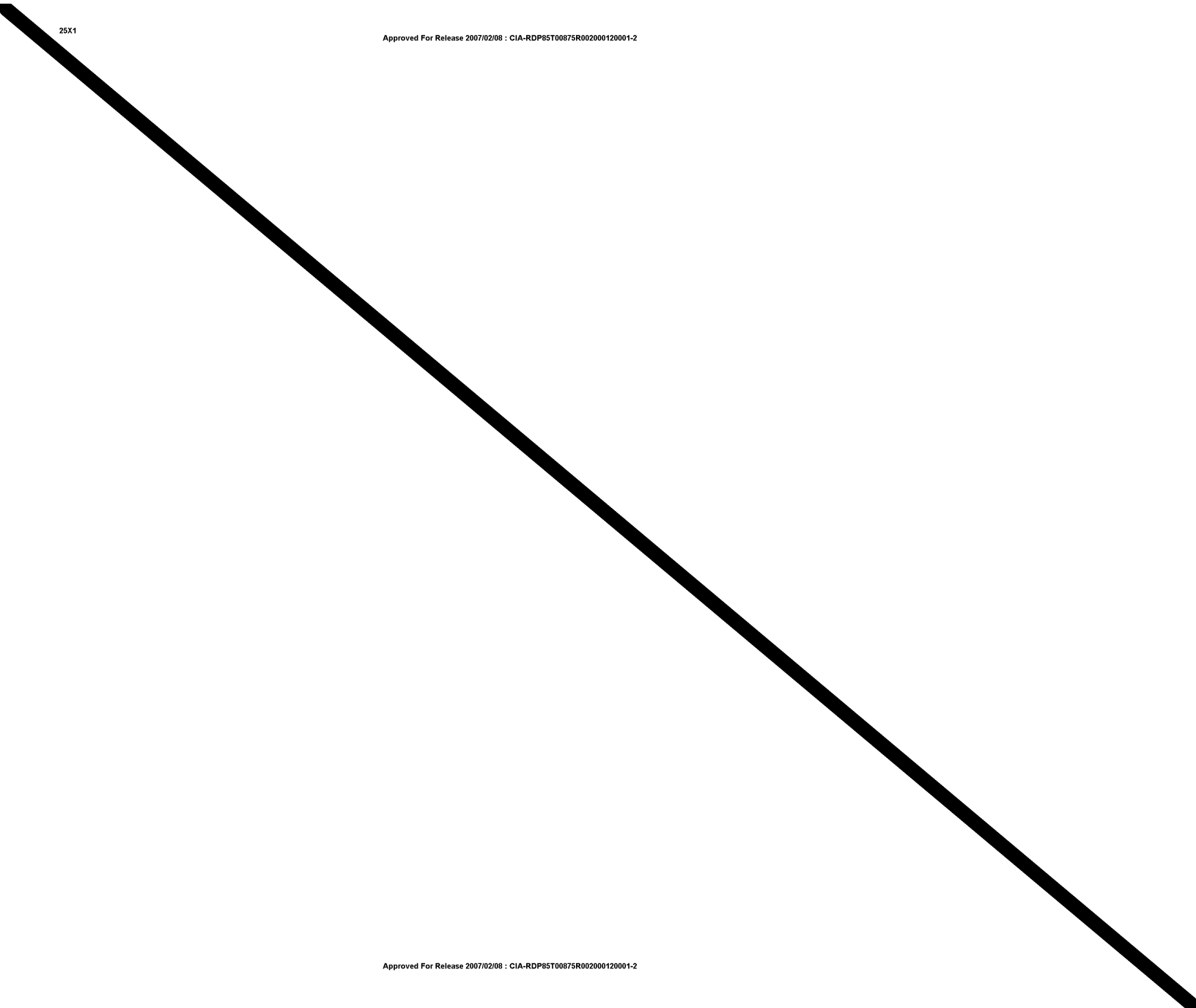

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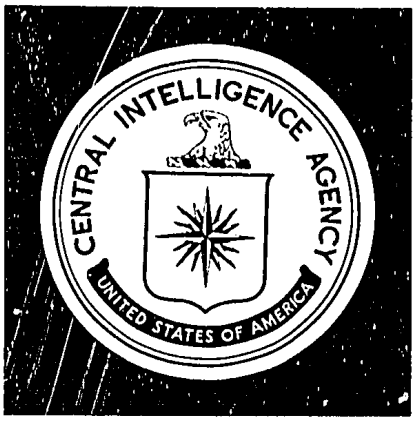
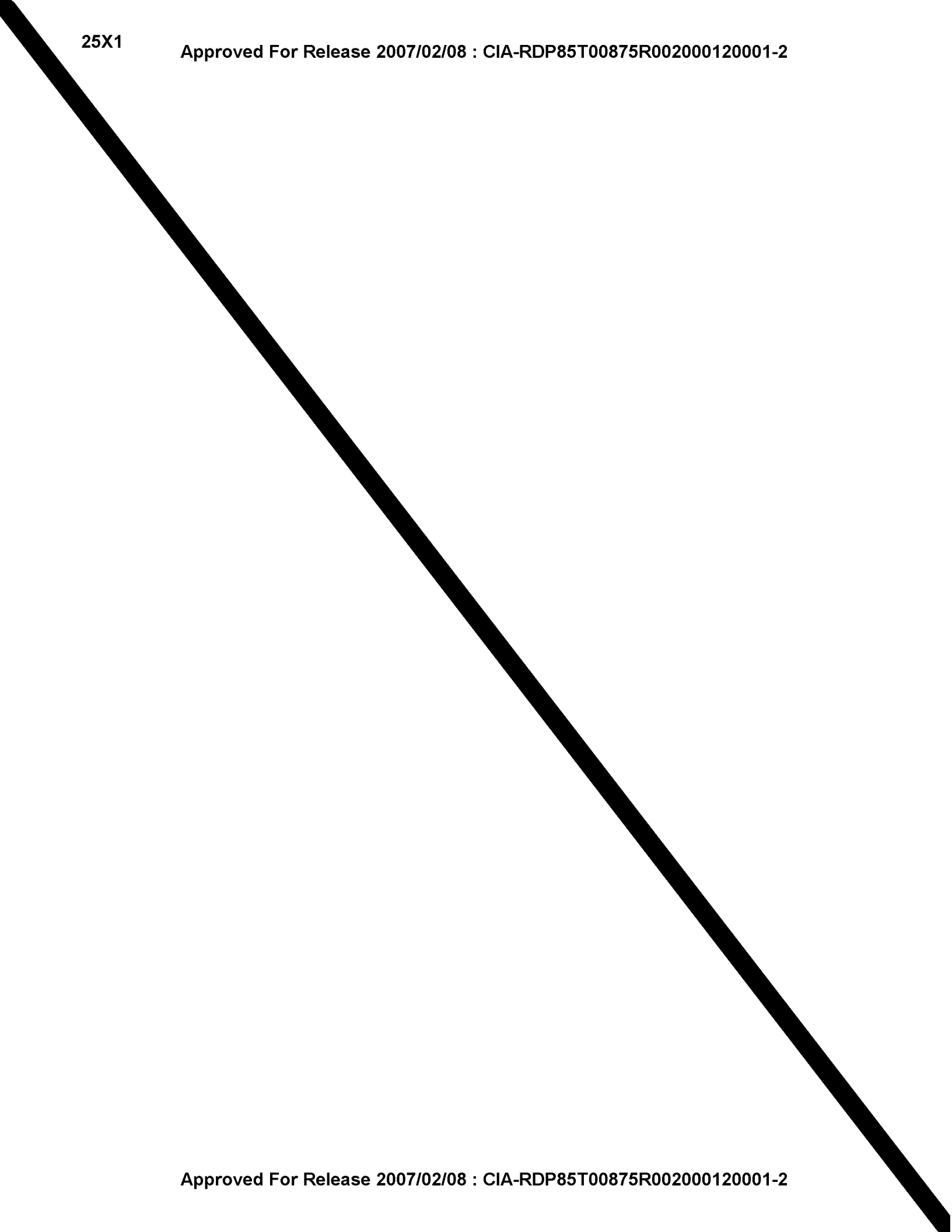


OFFICE OF
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

MEMORANDUM

Anti-Military Sentiment in Japan: Implications for the US

Secret
24 May 1972
Copy No. 84



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

24 May 1972

MEMORANDUM*

SUBJECT: Anti-Military Sentiment in Japan: Implications for the US

Attention is often given to the possibility of revived militarism in Japan. Recent developments, however, seem to indicate that anti-military sentiment is not only still strong in Japanese political life, but may be getting stronger. This is evident in Prime Minister Sato's embarrassingly numerous setbacks on defense-related matters, in the domestic frictions attending the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese rule, and in the renewed attention to base-related issues generally as the Vietnamese war has heated up.

The lame duck Sato administration is obviously at a disadvantage in coping with the emotionally charged military issue. But, in our view, any successor will face much the same problems if he tries to force the pace of Japan's military development. In any case, the clash between those who would speed up and those who would slow down Japan's military programs will become more and more important politically as the decade wears on. Inevitably, it will have repercussions on US security ties with Japan.

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* *This memorandum was prepared by the Office of National Estimates and discussed within CIA.*

Tokyo's Defense Headaches

1. Prime Minister Eisaku Sato may well be setting a record for longevity in office, but each passing day must seem more painful than the last. In recent months his government has only barely managed to squeak through one Diet crisis after another, at great cost to personal vanity and prestige. Indeed, if it had not been for the ceremonious aspects of Okinawan Reversion Day on 15 May, it is doubtful if Sato would have persisted in staying on in the face of pressures for his retirement. As it is, to appease his critics he has had to jettison several of his cabinet colleagues, humble himself repeatedly by admitting various errors and by assuming personal responsibility, and all but certify the date for his stepping down after reversion. Small wonder that his popular rating -- never high -- has tumbled to an all-time-low of 19 percent, much lower even than that of his elder brother, Kishi, when he was forced out of the same office in 1960 amidst controversy over renegotiation of the Mutual Security Treaty with the US.

2. Many of the government's recent problems have been related to defense issues. In February, Sato was tripped up on a technicality concerning the defense portion of the 1972 national budget which was up for consideration in the Diet. Included in the government's proposed defense expenditures this year of $2.6 billion was a modest sum of $11 million earmarked for a start on the procurement of new military aircraft -- to cost some $379 million over the 1972-1976 period of the Fourth Defense Buildup Plan. The difficulty was that the Plan had not -- and still has not -- been approved by a top civilian government council as required by the constitution. The Socialist Party -- foremost critic of Japan's military forces -- charged that to accept the proposed budget as it stood would be tantamount to sanctioning the entire new defense plan. Sato tried to save the day by offering to excise the controversial item but was forced by an 18-day boycott of the Diet by all opposition party members to take back the entire budget and submit a new one.

3. The budget fiasco can be attributed to gross mismanagement by a visibly weary lame duck government. Sato's successor -- whoever he is -- will presumably be in a stronger position to parry such parliamentary thrusts. Nevertheless, the opposition parties will continue to look for opportunities to attack the government on controversial issues such as rearmament. It is true that the earlier public antipathy toward the military for having led the nation into the debacle of World War II has by now dissipated, and that the Self Defense Forces generally are accorded a position of respect in today's society. It is further true that some Japanese are in favor of going farther and faster toward rearmament than the government has chosen to do. Still, the majority of the people do not favor any major strengthening of the present forces, remain opposed particularly to the development of an offensive capability (proscribed in fact by the constitution) and consider the nuclear option as totally unacceptable.

4. Leftist elements in Japan -- the Socialists and the Communists -- are quick to seize on seemingly minor incidents to fan latent public suspicions of the military, and in this they are helped considerably by a generally sympathetic and sensationalist media. Over the past year in fact, there has been an unusual concentration of such incidents. Last July, when an Air Self Defense Force trainer collided with a domestic airliner killing all 162 persons aboard, the charge was leveled that the tragedy had been caused by the government's granting of priority to military over civilian air traffic. Public furor resulted in the grounding of all military training flights for a month, the imposition of more stringent controls on such flights thereafter, and the immediate resignation of the Japan Defense Agency Director -- on the job for only a month. Within four months the succeeding director shared a similar fate, forced out of office over remarks allegedly derogatory to the United Nations.

5. Consider also the effect of Japanese newspaper accounts which used such terms as "Pearl Harbor-like, sneak move" in discussing an advance contingent

of the Self Defense Forces which moved into a former US air base -- now jointly used -- in the western suburbs of Tokyo, just before midnight one day last March. The government's rationale for the odd hour was that the military did not want to disrupt traffic, but a more valid reason apparently was to avoid demonstrations by local residents who strongly object to the resumption of noisy air traffic -- halted by the US since 1969 -- even by Japanese forces. Again, in April -- faced by the threat of another opposition boycott of the continuing Diet deliberations on the resubmitted budget -- Sato was compelled to recall to Japan a small amount of equipment shipped to Okinawa by the Self Defense Forces -- without cabinet approval -- in preparation for their assumption of security responsibilities after 15 May. The opposition charged that the incident was yet another demonstration of lack of civilian control over military activities. Sato apologized for the overstep and instructed the Defense Agency to exercise "utmost prudence" in deployment of the Self Defense Forces to Okinawa after reversion. This injunction can only complicate and perhaps retard the planned deployment of some 3,000 ground,

air, and maritime forces to Okinawa by the year's end. By the end of 1973, this initial force is scheduled to be doubled.

The Special Problem of Okinawa

6. The Japan Defense Agency knows that it faces a tough public relations job in Okinawa. The Okinawans have bitter memories of their treatment at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II, and are not convinced that today's Self Defense Forces are basically any different. And even though much of the local economy presently rests on the presence of US military bases, the average islander is not happy over the continued military role of Okinawa. This holds true even though the island has now reverted to Japanese administration. Leftist political parties on Okinawa, strong in their own right, are aligning themselves with their counterpart organizations on the main islands, such as the Socialist and Communist Parties. Prior to 15 May, several demonstrations had been held in Okinawa against the reversion treaty adopted by Japan

and the US, and visiting Japanese servicemen had even been roughed up in the streets. In an effort to neutralize the influence of extremist elements among the general populace, the Self Defense Forces committed to Okinawa will place initial emphasis on civic action projects, such as road building and well digging.

7. Prospects are that both the US and Japanese forces on Okinawa will bear the brunt of anti-military, anti-US sentiment in Japan. As a sop to opposition pressures, Sato is on record as prepared to seek a review of US base needs on Okinawa with an eye to scaling down our presence there. The recent upsurge of fighting in Vietnam may complicate the government's problems in this regard. While the leadership in Tokyo is sympathetic to President Nixon's policies, Japanese popular reaction has not been favorable to the new US attacks on North Vietnam.

8. Another complicating factor in the situation is that many Japanese remain skeptical that Okinawa has been returned "nuclear free" as promised by the US, or, even if it was, that hereafter unconventional weapons will

not be reintroduced. The nuclear issue has been intensified by the recent flurry of claims by opposition parties of "secret deals" between Japan and the US concerning Okinawa and bases elsewhere in Japan. The evidence cited -- including alleged official documents -- has largely been discredited, but the recurrent theme of a credibility gap has had an impact on the public. Many Japanese continue to believe that the US seeks to push Japan into a bigger military effort to help shoulder the security burden in East Asia. Over the years, statements by US officials on security aspects involving Japan have been frequently overblown in the local press, causing political problems for the Japanese government. Particularly now, in an era of international detente, the Japanese are sensitive to any suggestion that they are being cast in an outmoded role of Cold War warriors.

Threats to Japan-US Security Ties

9. Most recently, the urgent dispatch to Vietnam of US air and naval forces from bases in Japan has created considerable controversy over applicability of the "prior consultation" requirement under the 1960 Mutual Security Treaty. Under the treaty, major changes in the

deployment of US troops and equipment in Japan, and the use of facilities there for combat operations outside the country are subject to prior consultation with Japan. In the present instance, Foreign Minister Fukuda attempted to parry criticism in the Diet by explaining that such consultation was not required since the US units involved had not received their operational orders for Vietnam until after they had departed Japan. This has not satisfied the critics, however, and the Sato government has had to promise to review the prior consultation issue with the US after the current Diet session ends.

10. If, as seems likely, the opposition forces keep up pressure on this particular issue, it could pose a knotty problem for the Japanese government and result in tighter restrictions on the use of US bases and forces throughout Japan. Indeed, it would seem that, except for a threatened attack on Japan by either the USSR or China, the only circumstance in which the Japanese might readily respond positively in a prior consultation situation would be in the case of hostilities in Korea. And even there, it would probably have to be a case of outright Communist aggression against

South Korea, not US retaliatory actions growing out of some shooting incident between North Korean and US or South Korean forces. In the Pueblo and EC-121 crises of 1968 and 1969, Japan was extremely apprehensive about the possibility of becoming involved in just such a confrontation. If anything, Japan's circumspection is even greater today.

11. A major concern of the Japanese government is that the aura of detente spurred by President Nixon's visits to Peking and Moscow, and also by the continuing reduction of US military presence in Asia will lead the Japanese people to question the need for Japan to retain its security ties with the US. Many Japanese already see little value in the continued presence of US troops, which they regard as essentially out of step with the times. The Japanese government, of course, strongly desires to maintain the security treaty with the US, at least for several more years. In addition to the nuclear shield provided, the presence of US naval and air forces is deemed necessary by Tokyo to overcome its own present deficiencies in these services. Even so, some members of Sato's own party as well as the opposition,

are calling for revisions in the 1960 treaty in line with other actions to develop more independence from the US. The government faces the dilemma of retaining effective security ties with the US, and yet avoiding charges of being subservient. The present treaty does not require the presence in Japan of a single US serviceman, and a complete US withdrawal seems to be the initial goal of many critics of the military in Japan.

The Development of Indigenous Forces

12. Despite persistent recruitment problems and the overall lack of strong emphasis on the military sector, Japan's Self Defense Forces have grown over the years into a relatively powerful instrument. Now, with a more ambitious program for equipment modernization, the military's capabilities are being further enhanced. Even though less than one percent of the GNP, (about seven percent of the annual national budget) has been devoted to defense needs, the sums involved are substantial because of Japan's economic wealth. Particularly with the attention being given to expanding the domestic armament industry, there exists a tremendous potential for rapid

rearmament. Remembering their recent history, the anti-military forces in Japan are fearful that such a reaction could be triggered again by some severe emotional shock or national stress. Hence, even though present circumstances still seem favorable to their position, their intention is to maintain the heat on the security issue, hoping to keep the government on the defensive and the military handcuffed.

13. The Japanese government indeed would find it difficult to greatly expand its military forces -- even if it wanted to do so. To go against the prevailing mood would precipitate sharp political division in the country and destroy the political consensus which the LDP considers essential both to the security of the state and its own tenure of power. Confronted with a prolonged economic slowdown and international monetary problems, the government has reacted by cutting back to some degree on planned increases in military expenditures in favor of greater emphasis on the social infrastructure sector. And, even with the modest goal under the new defense plan of adding a few thousand more personnel to the present Self Defense Force, the government faces

difficulties in meeting quotas for its all-volunteer forces in a labor-short market. Actual strength of the military now is about 234,000; authorized strength is 258,000. In an effort to improve personnel morale and increase the attractiveness of a military career, wage and benefit increases are incorporated in the new plan.

14. Thus, there are strong crosscurrents at work in Japan as regards the military issue. On the one hand, there are the numerically small, but influential advocates of a powerfully rearmed Japan, including nuclear weapons. They argue that any nation without a first class military establishment to back up its foreign policy objectives cannot hope to carry real weight in the international arena -- no matter what the extent of its economic strength. Most of them are on the right wing, though a few are "defense intellectuals" whose domestic politics are muted or hard to label. On the other extreme, are the more numerous -- but less tightly organized -- leftist opponents of any significant military effort, spearheaded by Socialist advocates of unarmed neutrality. The bulk of the Japanese people are somewhere in between, and their

attitudes on the issue of national defense fluctuate within certain broad limits depending on day-to-day events.*

15. As far as the military issue is concerned, it is difficult to pin any precise labels on the principal contenders to succeed Sato as president of the ruling party -- and hence as the next prime minister. They have all avoided clean-cut stands on the controversial issue as much as they could. This holds especially true for trade Minister Tanaka, who seems to be gaining ground on once favorite Foreign Minister Fukuda. Fukuda -- perhaps more than the others -- is identified with status quo policies, although none of the

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* *For example, a recent newspaper poll reveals that Japanese "nuclear allergy" has increased, reversing an earlier steady downward trend. This year, 58 percent of those polled were "absolutely opposed" to nuclear armament, as contrasted to 46 percent in 1969. The security treaty with the US was viewed as useful to Japan by 52 percent of a sample poll in 1969 as against 48 percent this year. Some 62 percent of those queried in 1972 felt some uneasiness over the existence of US bases in Japan; 23 percent said the bases should be abolished while 55 percent favored gradual reduction.*

candidates can be said to hold radically different views. Former Foreign Ministers Miki and Ohira, and former Defense Agency Director Nakasone have -- at one time or another -- all spoken vaguely on the possible need for revisions in the Mutual Security Treaty but favor its retention. During his tenure in the defense post, Nakasone pushed the concept of non-nuclear "autonomous" defense for Japan, but with the US playing a critical supplementary role.

16. Not unnaturally in a consensus society, the postwar Japanese leadership thus far has hewed to a cautious, middle course as regards the military. Under this approach, there has been an unostentatious and gradual, but effective buildup of the Self Defense Forces with emphasis on qualitative improvement in personnel and equipment. This policy has had a large degree of public support, serving to keep future options open while avoiding challenge and controversy as much as possible.

17. At a minimum, the goal seems to be the development of a military capability sufficient to elicit world respect for Japan and to provide the beginnings of

a deterrent against conventional military probes by the USSR or China. It would seem that the trend in this direction will continue over the next several years, barring a serious deterioration in relations with the USSR or China, or a drastic loosening of security ties with the US. In either of these circumstances, the argument for an accelerated military effort -- possibly including the acquisition of nuclear weapons -- would become more compelling to those Japanese as yet unconvinced of the need or advisability. But given the considerable uncertainties about how great power relations in the Pacific will evolve, and where Japan will fit into the new patterns, Japan is still a long way from making any sweeping decisions on these matters.